

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 306876

FOR FRDCO

FOLLOWING BEIRUT 8880 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO ROME BRUSSELS
DEC 15; REPEATED TO YOU QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 8880

ROME FOR RCAA/FAA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR, LE, PFOR

SUBJECT: AMERICAN CARRIERS AT BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

REF: STATE 285839

1. AS ADDRE SEES AWARE, BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (BIA)
HAS BEEN FUNCTIONING FOR DAYLIGHT OPERATIONS NOW FOR SEVERAL
WEEKS, AND ON DEC 10 BEGAN LANDING CARGO FLIGHTS AT NIGHT.
OPERATIONS SO FAR HAVE BEEN WITHOUT SECURITY OR TECHNICAL
INCIDENT. SEVERAL AIRLINES ARE NOW FLYING REGULARLY TO
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PAGE 02 STATE 306876

BEIRUT, INCLUDING MEA, AIR FRANCE, ALIA, KLM,
INTERFLUG, AND BEGINNING NEXT YEAR ALITALIA AND POSSIBLY BA.
INCREASINGLY, BEIRUT CIRCLES ARE ASKING US WHEN PANAM MIGHT REAPPEAR.

2. WE UNDERSTAND THAT RESUMPTION OF PANAM FLIGHTS TO BEIRUT
WILL DEPEND ON A NEW FAA CERTIFICATION OF BIA.

3. WE UNDERSTAND CONCERNS WHICH INFLUENCE PANAM'S
RELUCTANCE TO RESUME SERVICE. LEBANESE WATCHING FOR
SIGNS, SUCH AS INCREASE OF EMBASSY STAFF, RETURN OF
AMERICAN FIRMS, ETC., AS HEARTENING INDICATION OF RETURN
TO NORMALCY HERE. W OBVIOUSLY SHOULD NOT BE PRESSURED
INTO TAKING SUCH MOVES UNTIL SECURITY AND OTHER FACTORS
SO WARRANT. ON OTHER HAND, WE MUST BEAR IN MIND THAT
RESUMPTION OF PANAM FLIGHTS HAS POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE
IN EXCESS OF OTHER AIRLINES IN TERMS OF "CONFIDENCE
FACTOR" AMONG THE BODY POLITIC HERE. AS A CONSEQUENCE,
AND TO REPLY TO QUERIES, WOULD BE HELPFUL TO HAVE FAA'S
CURRENT THINKING ON BIA AND PANAM'S THINKING ON RESUMPTION
OF OPERATIONS IN BEIRUT. WE ARE NOT READY TO PRESS
PANAM'S RETURN, BUT WE DO THINK TIME MAY BE
APPROACHING WHEN WE MAY WISH TO DO SO. HOUGHTON UNQUOTE
KISSINGER

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NNN

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